



Army Officers See in Plan Greatest Forward Step in the Policy of National Preparedness

What the College Men in Training at Plattsburg Are Doing Under Actual Regular Army Discipline



Instruction in trench digging and fighting.

A field mess after a morning hike.
Above—One of the companies drilling.

Soldier students at mess.

THE 600 college students who are attending the military instruction camp at Plattsburg, N. Y., came to a keen realization of the fact that the War Department meant business almost as soon as they stepped from the boats and trains that brought them to the camp last Monday. They found waiting for them one or two spruce officers, students like themselves, but of more experience in military life, who marshalled them into ranks and marched them to the camp proper. It was then that the majority realized that the statement "Military discipline will prevail throughout the duration of the camp," printed in the War Department bulletin, was to be taken literally.

There is no doubt that many of the students came to the camp with the idea that it was to be one long good time and that serious work was to be a secondary matter. That idea was soon dispelled and it is the universal opinion among the student soldiers that they have put in about as hard a week as could be conceived.

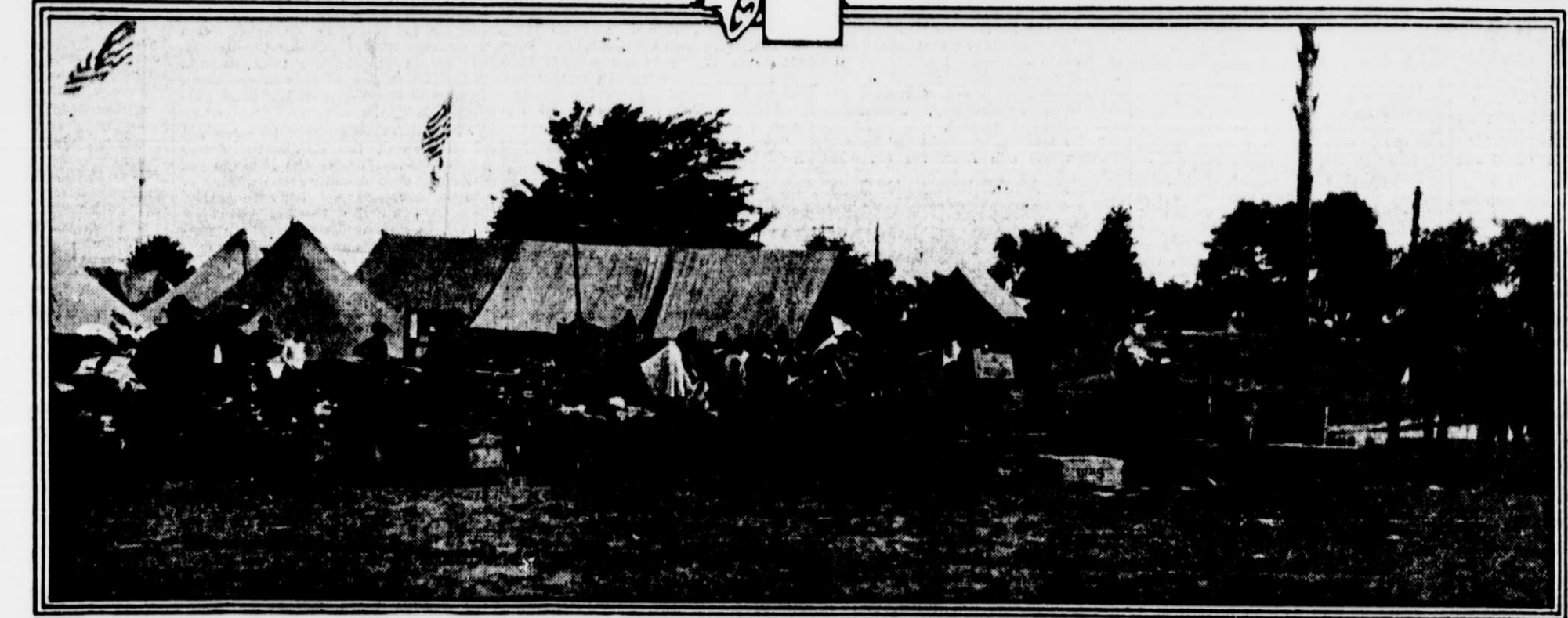
The camp at Plattsburg is one of the four that the War Department is conducting this summer. The three others are at Luddington, Mich.; Chickamauga, Ga.; and the Presidio, San Francisco. The New York camp is by far the largest of the four. In all about 2,000 students are receiving instruction.

The camps are restricted to college students and graduates up to the age of 29, and to students in the graduating classes of high schools. The idea is to train young, educated men so that they would be capable of acting as officers of volunteer troops if their services were needed. The training given during the five weeks is expected to fit the young men to serve as Second Lieutenants. Army officers regard the establishment of the camps as the greatest forward step in the policy of national preparedness since the establishment of the General Staff in the regular army.

The students attending the camps have the same social status as undergraduates at West Point, although they pay their own board, which amounts to \$250 a week, and purchase their own uniforms. The War Department furnishes rifles and all other military equipment.

For a week before the opening of the Plattsburg camp a large force of regular troops was on the site preparing it for the use of the students. They were in charge of Capt. R. O. Van Horn of the Third Infantry, stationed at the Plattsburg barracks. Capt. Van Horn is acting as commander of the students' camp.

Coming to the fact that there are over 600 students in camp, Capt. Van Horn was able to form them into a battalion with himself in command with the rank of Major. The battalion is made up of four companies, with 150 men to a company. This is what is known as war strength, and the officers in charge



The first day in camp.

regard themselves as particularly lucky to be able to organize the men in this manner, because the opportunities for practical work will be all the greater.

In command of each company is a First Lieutenant of the regular army, who ranks as Captain. With each company there is also a Second Lieutenant of the regular army. The third commissioned officer is a student who has had special training in a military college and who has attended previous camps of this kind.

All the non-commissioned officers, from the top sergeant down to the lowest corporal, are drawn from the ranks of the students themselves. It is planned, if possible, to have all the men in the camp act as non-commissioned officers some time during its duration.

The tents provided for the students are of the pyramidal type, and six men are quartered in a tent. The camp has been piped throughout with running water and every precaution has been taken to safeguard its sanitary features. The camp itself is in an ideal location, pitched as it is on the very shore of Lake Champlain.

For the first day or two the company formations presented a queer sight, for many of the students had not procured uniforms, while many others appeared in dress part military and part civilian. However, a military clothier had established headquarters at the camp, and in a few days all the students appeared in the neat khaki uniform prescribed by the War Department. This uniform is similar in every respect to that worn by the men in the army save that the hat cord, the color of which indicates the branch of service, is distinctive from anything ever before prescribed. The student hat cord is red, white and blue.

On the morning of the second day of camp regular work was started. With barely time to tumble out of their cots and to dress the men were assembled at 5:30 in the various company streets and put through ten minutes of stiff calisthenic drill. For the final spurt the men were required to do ten dips, and this exercise has been gradually increased until some of the companies are now doing twenty-five dips.

On the first day of the regular work the men were put through what is known as the school of the soldier. On this

day also a physical examination of the men was conducted by three army surgeons. A second examination is held at the close of the camp, and the results of the two are compared. In former years the surgeons say that the improvement in the condition of virtually all the students has been remarkable. There is scarcely one who has not benefited greatly by camp life, as hardened muscles and increased power of endurance have testified.

On the third day the men were supplied with rifles and the manual of arms was taught. The first of the daily inspections of quarters was also held and the students were instructed how to make up their cots in the approved military style. From then on the old soldier rule, "One soldier, one bunk, one rifle," &c., was drilled into the student until the captain and his aids were able to make the morning inspection with scarcely a word of criticism.

The surgeons also gave the first of the anti-typhoid vaccinations during the week. This is given free of charge to all the students who desire it, and practically all took advantage of the opportunity. This vaccination must be

given three times, at periods about ten days apart. Every afternoon retreat is held at 5, being preceded by guard mount a half hour earlier. At retreat the entire battalion assembles under arms and stands at present arms, while the band plays "The Star Spangled Banner" as the flag is lowered. Several men are selected from each company every night to mount guard. These men are on guard throughout the night and walk post for two hours and then rest for four hours.

Some of the regular army officers who had only served with troops of the line were surprised at the rapid advance made by the students in mastering the close order drill during the past week. In practically three days the students had acquired the fundamentals and were able to execute the commands in such a manner as to elicit commendation from the officers. It is this ability to master problems quickly that characterizes the student camps throughout and enables the students to cover much ground in the five weeks allowed for training.

The first week of the camp is regarded as by far the hardest and most uninteresting of the five. Beginning the second week the work will be more varied and the students will begin to get a taste of real campaigning. After a day or two spent in mastering the details of extended order the student battalion will be ready for some simple problems in maneuvers.

The companies will proceed from four to ten miles from the camp and will be instructed in problems of patrolling, advance and rear guard. Some of the regular troops will act as the enemy, and blank ammunition will be used for the sake of realism.

The third week these problems will be increased in difficulty and extent until they resemble those arising in a real battle. The last week spent in the regular camp will be given over to rifle practice. Twenty students who attain the required average will receive badges showing that they have qualified as sharpshooters or marksmen, and some may even attain the grade of expert rifleman.

During the fifth week will be held the practice march, the final test of efficiency and the practical application of all that has been taught in the four preceding weeks.

Intrenching tools will be carried and the students will be instructed in that all important feature of modern warfare, trench digging and the formation of bomb proof shelters. Various problems of reconnaissance, attack and defence will be taken up.

Practically every college and university in New York city and State has its representatives at the camp. The other students are drawn chiefly from the educational institutions of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and the New England States.